Flathead Forest Supervisor

Kurt Steele

It has come to my attention that a group called POWDR is planning to purchase the Holland Lake Lodge. Apparently, this is a group that does business in adventure lifestyles involving skiing, heli-skiing and snowmobiling among other things. This appears to be a company with big money for developing areas for people with big money to use. From what I understand, this company wants to build new cabins, bunkies, and a new lodge on the side of the old one along with increasing the size of the restaurant. I’m assuming this will all be for the use of people who are willing and able to pay high prices for the privilege of being there. The Forest Service’s job is to manage the public land for all to use, not a select few.

I’m writing in objection to this project for the following reasons:

In order to do this, apparently upwards of 200 trees will be removed along the shoreline from the Lodge toward the falls. As it is now, owners of the cabins on the other side of the lake have not been able to remove trees to better their view of the lake so I fail to see why this big corporation with their own interests are allowed to come in and do that after others have never been able to do so.

Removing these trees will not only affect the view, beauty, and charm of the lake, it affects wildlife. As you should know this area is home to threatened species such as grizzly bears, wolverines, lynx, bull trout and loons. Other species would be affected as well such as black bear and deer. Changing the landscape in such a dramatic way, along with increasing the human population in the area is extremely detrimental for these animals.

I’m no expert, but I don’t think one has to be, to see how this huge project would affect the environment. I understand this is to be a facility for year around use with housing for staff and accommodation for well over 100 people. I would guess that if this takes place the sky will be the limit with expansion beyond our imagination. This has got to affect the water quality and waste removal. Would this involve drilling several wells and installing several septic systems to handle the sewage produced? The amount of garbage produced would be huge also. The traffic would grow exponentially harming wildlife, the environment, the quality of recreational use and camping, and compromising safety of all in the area.

Holland Lake is a small lake compared to others in Montana such as Flathead, Canyon Ferry, or even Georgetown. We have been camping there for close to 50 years. We have seen the number of users grow to the point that the lake is getting crowded, especially on the weekends. Even though the number of people using the lake has grown, the beauty and environment have not changed to a great degree. If this project goes through, we will no longer be able say that. Unfortunately, there will be a large, permanent scar on the landscape which will benefit a few and ruin the area for the many who love it the way it is. The historical feeling of the lodge will be destroyed. The forest will be irreparably harmed. The peace and tranquility of this jewel will not be available for further generations. Quoting from your website, “the mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.” This project is in direct opposition to that statement.

The most objectionable part of this is that it is being considered without a full environmental impact study. I understand that you have said this could be done with a categorical exclusion. From what I’ve read that is to be used for minor changes such as installing a toilet or putting up a fence. To quote, it is for “Changes or amendments to an approved action when such changes have no or minor potential environmental impact.” This project does not meet this definition in anyway!! The impact would be anything but minor.

In conclusion, I am asking you to consider the huge impact this project has on this beautiful little lake and its ecosystem which must be preserved to the best of our ability. It behooves us all to care for this little gem and preserve it for all future generations to love and enjoy as we have. I implore you to consider the impacts of this project and deny it!